

Sibling Rivalry doesn't mean your children don't like each other. By Lisa Armstrong

Are your children always fighting? Do you worry that your children don't like each other? Well, you are not alone!

In fact, I worried about this very thing when my children were growing up.

If you have more than one child or had siblings yourself, you know that the fighting can sometimes feel like an Olympic sport.

But here's the reassuring part: Sibling conflict is a normal part of growing up and learning how to be in a relationship.

Children are practicing big skills through these everyday squabbles:

- How to express what they want
- How to manage strong emotions
- How to negotiate and compromise
- How to set boundaries
- How to disagree with someone they love and still stay connected.



Of course, this doesn't mean we should simply let them battle it out! Parents still have an important role to play.

- Rather than focusing on who is right or who started it, we can slow things down and give both children the opportunity to be heard.
- Encourage children to reflect on how their behaviour made the other person feel.
- Reflect what you see and hear without taking sides.
- Reinforce boundaries and family rules and help them with problem solving. "You must have been upset with your sister for doing that, I get it. What could you do next time if this happens again, because we don't hit each other in this family."
- Sometimes if children are too emotional it's best to separate the children and come together later to talk about it when both parties have calmed down.

The repair is always more important than the fight.

A child who learns "We can have a disagreement, feel angry, say sorry, make amends and reconnect," is learning something incredibly valuable about relationships.

We don't want to raise children who never argue. We want to raise children to learn that conflict doesn't have to mean the end of a relationship.

So, the next time your children are arguing over the last biscuit, who gets to sit where, or whose turn it is.....

Take a breath. This is messy, noisy relationship practice and somewhere underneath all that squabbling, they are learning how to love, disagree, repair, and reconnect.